Training International Students on Emotional Wellness and Mental Health Awareness



#### Presenters



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## Agenda

- What's Going On With Our Students
- Understanding the Challenges The Chinese Example
- Seeking Care
- Programming That Works
- Resources
- Discussion & Questions



## What's Going On?

Felt overwhelming anxiety within the last 12 months

Felt so depressed it was difficult to function

Felt things were hopeless

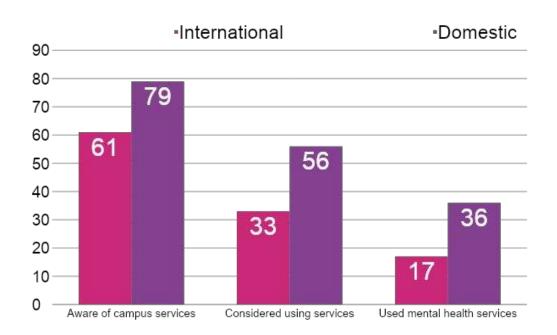




56.7% Diagnosed
Up from 48% in 2013
(NIMH 2013, 2017)

(ACHA, Spring 2013, Fall 2017)

#### Mental Health Care



Mental Health Need, Awareness, and Use of Counseling Services Among International Graduate Students, Journal of American College Health

Source: Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lusting, 2010

## Understanding the Challenges

The Chinese Example



#### TOP TEN PLACES OF ORIGIN OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



51% of international students come from China and India.

Open Doors is conducted by the Institute of International Education with the support of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. **Online at: www.iie.org/opendoors** 





## Case Example

- 25-year-old Chinese international student; second year of doctoral program
- "Disappeared" from classes; no response to emails or phone calls
- Advisor eventually walks her to your office
- "I've had problems in my classes and been sick recently. I need more time
  for assignments but don't feel I can ask for it. I was a top student in China
  and am ashamed of my performance, so I've been avoiding my advisor. I
  don't want to worry anyone else about my problems."



#### The New York Times

Chinese, Studying in America, and Struggling

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By HELEN GAO DEC. 12, 2017





#### 26岁中国留学生斯坦福大学自杀身 亡:天之骄子背后的压力究竟有多 可怕?



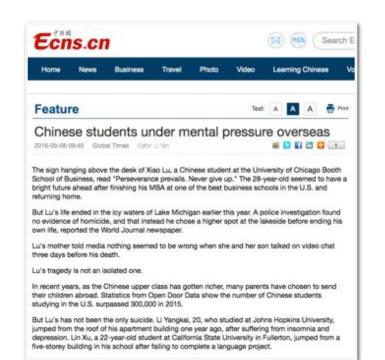
北美学霸君.

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最近翟天临"学术不端"事情闹得沸沸扬扬,与此同时,博士所面临的压力也逐渐被大众所知晓——写论文做实验、整日愁得掉头发...就在2月11日,斯坦福一名材料科学与工程系的博士用自杀告别了这个世界,根据警方确认其为26岁的中国留学生,我们只看到了表面的光鲜亮丽,殊不知他们背后经历了多少无助与痛苦... 学霸君真心希望无论是申请党还是已经在国外就读的留学生都要关注自己的心理健康,学霸君理解你们的压力,希望你们可以照顾好自己。









#### 26岁中国留学生斯坦福大学自杀身 亡: 天之骄子背后的压力究竟有多 可怕?



超近福天临"学术不端"事情闹得沸沸扬扬,与此周时,博士所面临的压力也逐渐被大众所如 统一写论文做实验、整日影得掉头发、就在 月11日,斯坦福一名材料科学与工程系的博士 用自杀告别了这个世界,根据置方确认其为26 岁的中国简学生,我们只看到了表面的光鲜亮 丽,殊不知他们背后经历了多无助与痛苦。 学霸君真心希望无论是申请党还是已经在国外 就读的留学生都要关注自己的心理健康,学霸 君理解你们的压力,希望你们可以照顾好自









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## Common Stressors



Why Chinese International Students Struggle | 중국 유학생들의 실태 | 留学生が実家に電話する | 中国在澳留学生与父母的对话

92,231 views 

1.2K ● 34 → SHARE =+ SAVE



## Common **Stressors**

Chinese students who return with an American degree, known in China as 'sea turtles.' used to be all but guaranteed an accelerated career path in China."

"I hate how the Asians here talk in the library and cheat on their tests. Like get the f--k out."

"Like many Chinese students, she was a city girl in a country town. 'I wondered where the subway was.'

Career Planning **Finances** Area of Study **Planning** 

> Identity Acculturatio Social Class Discriminati on

Communication Styles Daily routine Verbal vs. non-verbal High-context vs. professors low-context

Second language anxiety

Communicating with classmates, roommates

Asking for help

#### Academic

Formal vs. informal classroom Presentation/participation styles Outcome vs. process oriented

#### Interpersonal

Boundaries Peer Pressure Parental **Expectations** 

"For many Chinese students, the language barrier can be tough to overcome, and culturally, it's simply more comfortable to cluster together. But the largely monolingual American students don't make much effort, either."

> maddy si professor nas already warned her about the improper use of footnotes and borrowed text - academic niceties unfamiliar to Chinese kids taught at home to regurgitate facts for their

"Haddy has never felt comfortable participating in the more decadent rites of American university life – the frat parties and binge-drinking.'

#### Common Psychological Challenges

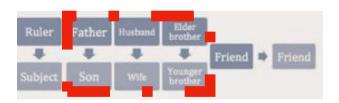
- → 1. Separation from parents
- → 2. Face and shame
  - 3. Clash of cultures
  - 4. Identity formation



## 1. Separation from Parents

- Confucian view of child's role (Root -> Grass -> Tree)
- Support vs. expectation, boundaries/separation
- "Compensation syndrome"





## 2. Face and Shame

- "Face" (面子/臉)
- "Men cannot live without shame. A sense of shame is the beginning of integrity."—Mencius (孟子)
- Focus on external and comparisons
- Shame linked to suicide



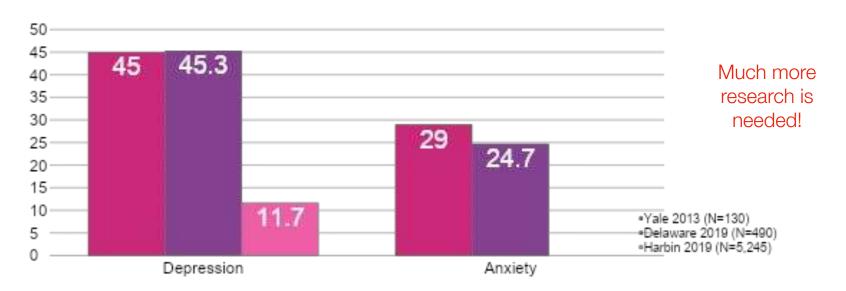
#### Success at what cost?

- Perfectionistic cognitive distortions (unhelpful thinking styles)
- Black and white thinking
- Asian American students with perfectionistic thinking more vulnerable to depression
- Modeled by rigid expectations from parents





#### Symptom Burden in Chinese Students



Han X, Han X, Luo Q, Jacobs S, Jean-Baptiste M. J Am Coll Health. 2013;61:1-8.
Chen L, Wang L, Qiu XH, et al. PLoS One. 2013;8.
Shadowen NL, Williamson AA, Guerra NG, Ammigan R, Drexler ML. J International Students.
2019;9(1):129-148.

## Barriers to Treatment

- Belief that depression and anxiety are personal weaknesses rather than illnesses
- Emotional inhibition rather than expression
- Low awareness of services and help-seeking
- Language/cultural barriers
- Role of psychiatry in many Asian countries
- Stigma/shame





Yeung A, Kung W. Psychiatric News. 2004; 21(1): 34-36. Kim BSK, Omizo MM. Counseling Psychology. 2003; 31:343-46.

#### Culture and Mental Health Stigma

- Mental illness is highly stigmatized in Chinese culture (~ psychosis)
- Implications for marriage
- "Neurasthenia"(神经衰弱)
- Emphasis on somatic rather than psychological symptoms



Cupping points for treating neurasthenia.

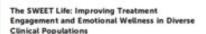






## Differences in Presentation

- May not acknowledge depressed mood
- Increased somatic complaints
- Avoidance, procrastination, academic decline (?)
- Cross-cultural bridge: "Stress" (压力)



The increasing diversity of the U.S. population poses a challenge for mental health clinicians. Culture affects nearly every aspect of psychiatric service engagement due to its profound influence on illness beliefs, treatment-seeking behavior, and stigma. Disparities in both psychiatric service utilization and outcomes therefore continue to disproportionately affect individuals who are not in the dominant Caucasian, English-speaking, native-born group.



Image courtesy MGH Center for Cross-Cultural Student Emotional Wellness

# Emerging Issues

- Video game/Internet addiction
- Eating disorders
- Herbal supplements
- Social media
- Limited therapy resources on campus







# Case Example, Cont'd

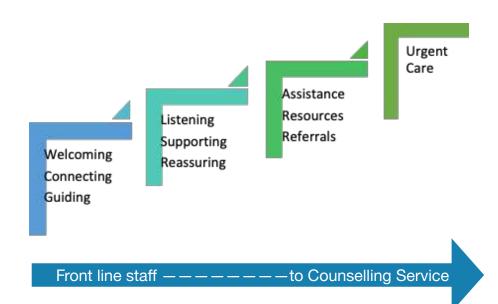
- "Very overwhelmed"; not sleeping or eating well for weeks
- "What if I don't need to worry about all these difficulties anymore?"
- Homesick, isolated, but did not tell parents
- "Has never had counseling before. "Why would talking to someone help me? And will it go on my record?"



# Seeking Care



## Ways to Support Mental Health



## Observe and Approach

- Noticing difficulties
- Acknowledging and asking
- Being patient and being willing to listen



## Observe and Approach

- Somatic vs. psychological focus
- Seeking consultation

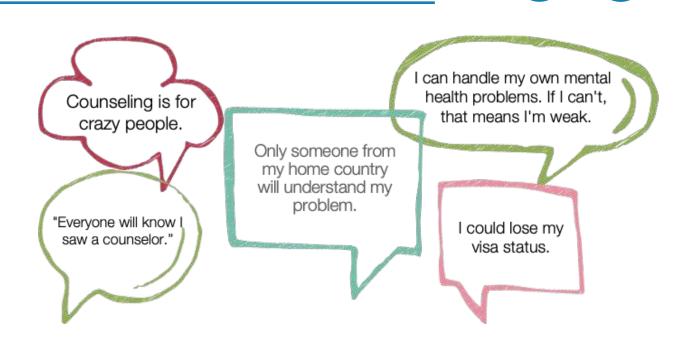


#### When to Refer?

- Deterioration in Personal Hygiene or Dress
- Dramatic Weight Loss or Gain
- Noticeable Changes in Mood
- Excessive Absences
- Academic Problems
- Social Isolation and Unusual Behaviors
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse
- Threat of Harm to Themselves or Others



#### Common Mental Health Myths



## Addressing Myths

- Emphasizing it is a sign of strength
- Explaining confidentiality
  - Not on school record/transcript
  - Friends, family and sponsor will not know
- Won't affect visa status
- Cultural competency counselors are trained to be open, knowledgeable, and skillful



## How to Refer

- Introducing counseling
- Make the call or walk in together
- Make no assumptions and ask their provider preference
- Build a relationship with the Counseling Center



## After the Counselling Center

- Set a reminder to follow-up with the student
- Ask questions about the meeting
- Be sure to listen for barriers
- Encourage to go consistently
- Counseling is voluntary



#### **Current Trends**

- "Third culture kid": not belonging to everywhere, identity crisis
- Race issue
- Job search stress: not a welcoming environment
- Vacation isolation: especially after travel ban
- Changing resources on campus



# Programming That Works



# Building the Trust

### Creating the Connection

- Include mental health and counseling information pre-departure
- Introduce counseling/wellness initiatives
- Testimonials from current students

## Mental Health in Orientation

- Inform students of challenges and cultural adjustment
- Invite counseling center or other mental health professionals
- Educate students about campus/community resources
- Parent and partner programs
- Train peer leaders and mentors about these issues to help guide students

## Programming That Helps

- Buddy/Peer mentor programs
- Workshops (e.g., "Decoding U.S. Culture", "Lost in Translation", "Culture Shock")
- "Let's Talk" Drop-in Hours
- University 101-type courses
- Social organizations/student clubs
- Summer/Holiday programs
- Friendship family programs
- Discussion/Support Groups
- Creative initiates (e.g., "Welcome to My World Photo Exhibition")

## How to Reduce Stigma

- Dispel the myths
- Know the facts about cultural differences around counseling
- Invite on-campus counselors/psychologists to orientation and meet & greet opportunities
- Educate counselors/psychologists on how to communicate across cultures
- Give testimonials even anonymously, and perhaps in their native language
- Normalize students' concerns and stress
- Creative ways of introducing counseling

### Culture of Care

#### In the International Office

Advisors support students with counseling skills, including:

- Demonstrating empathy
- Reflecting and paraphrasing
- Asking open questions & building rapport
- Keep a professional code of public silence
- Learn how to pronounce names correctly



### Culture of Care

#### In the International Office

In difficult conversations:

- Consider student's reaction v. discomfort delivering news
- Don't avoid because it's uncomfortable (ex: suicide)
- Be positive

### Planning Ahead:

Know whom to call and how to behave

### Training:

- Step up bystander intervention trainings
- Campus connect training for suicide prevention

## Building Bridges

Mental Health outside of the mental health sphere

- Depression screening at Student Health Center
- Establishing a knowledge-sharing community (know your partners)
- Highlight counseling center events through newsletters, social media, etc.
- Know the services offered around campus, and form connection
  - Chapel
  - Ombudsperson Office
  - Dean of Students
  - Child and Family Studies



## Resource

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## **Emotional Wellness Training**





Powerpoint Presentation



Interactive Activities



Video Content



Proctor Guide



Student Handout

#### Download online at

https://www.internationalstudentinsur ance.com/school-resources/mental-h ealth-awareness-training/

In partnership with:





# Student Info Page



https://www.internationalstudentinsurance.com/explained/mental-health.php

### **Emotional Wellness Consortium**

- A year-long virtual institute that supports university and secondary school staff in enhancing international student mental health
- Strong focus on partnership with expert clinicians and cultivating a community of like-minded professionals
- www.mghstudentwellness.org/consortium

"With increasing numbers of international and domestic students of Asian heritage choosing our school, the partnership with the Consortium has been invaluable."

—Adria Pavletic, Director of Health Services, St. Mark's School

We have an average member satisfaction score of 6.5 / 7

lecture-discussions led by Center clinicians

Monthly

**Confidential case discussion** about anonymized students

Exclusive opportunities for partnership with the Center, tailored to your needs







### Resources

### NAFSA Resources

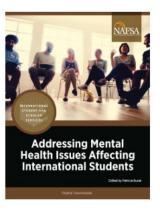
Now Available: Addressing Mental Health Issues Affecting International Students

Crisis Management in a Cross Cultural Setting: ISSS

### Other Resources

Tufts University Counseling and Mental Health Service

Information for international students regarding counseling



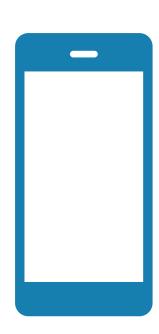
### Services & Hotlines

#### <u>Hotlines</u>

- National Suicide Prevention (1-800-273-TALK)
  - www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org
- The National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-SAFE)
  - <a href="http://www.thehotline.org/">http://www.thehotline.org/</a>
- It Gets Better Project, LGBTQ (1-866-4-U-TREVOR)
  - www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/get-help

#### **Services**

Crisis Text Line - http://www.crisistextline.org/ Text 741-741



## Questions

"International students who reported a more functional relationship with their advisors were less likely to report having an emotional or stress-related problem in the past year."

### Contact Information



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